



American Bison

Bison bison

Geographical Range: Once found over most of the U.S. from the west coast to east coast, Canada to Texas. It is now restricted to Zoos and National State Parks.

Habitat: The American Bison prefers the large open spaces of the plains.

Exhibit Location: The bison exhibit is near the back of the Zoo behind the main exhibit building and primate house. It is also open for viewing to the public from Delaware Park.

Physical Characteristics: The bison has a massive head, short neck, short curved horns (both sexes), and a high hump on its shoulder. The average height is 5-6 feet at the shoulder, and adults can weigh between 800 and 2,000 lbs. Their dark brown coat becomes almost black at the head and shoulders. Long shaggy hair envelops the head, neck, and forelimbs. A long tuft of hair hangs from the chin of adult males.

Diet: In the wild, bison browse for grasses and shrubs. In captivity, they receive alfalfa, and Timothy or Clover hay.

Did you know?

- The Plains Indians depended on the bison for their livelihood, following the herds on their migration. In 1700, over 60,000,000 bison roamed the open plains from the U.S. to Canada.
- The main slaughter of the bison came with the building of the Union Pacific Railroad. Sportsmen would shoot the bison from the club-car, and leave the majority of the carcass to rot. In 1989 only 835 bison remained.

Status: Numbers stable at this time.